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The Logic of Imperial Insanity and the Road to World War III

Defining the Imperial Stratagem

In the late 1990s Brzezinski wrote up the design for America's imperial project in the 21st century in his book, "The Grand Chessboard." He stated bluntly that, "it is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus of also challenging America," and then made clear the imperial nature of his strategy:

"To put it in a terminology that harkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together". [1]

He further explained that the Central Asian nations (or "Eurasian Balkans" as he refers to them):

"are of importance from the standpoint of security and historical ambitions to at least three of their most immediate and more powerful neighbors, namely Russia, Turkey and Iran, with China also signaling an increasing political interest in the region. But the Eurasian Balkans are infinitely more important as a potential economic prize: an enormous concentration of natural gas and oil reserves is located in the region, in addition to important minerals, including gold". [2]

Brzezinski emphasizes "that America's primary interest is to help ensure that no single power comes to control this geopolitical space and that the global community has unhindered financial and economic access to it." [3]

Obama as a Rabid Imperialist

Obama wasted no time in rapidly accelerating America's imperial adventures. While dropping the term "War on Terror" from usage, the Pentagon adopted the term, "overseas contingency operations." [4] This was to be the typical strategy of the Obama administration: change the appearance, not the substance. The name was changed, but the "War on Terror" remained, and not only that, it was rapidly accelerated to a level that would not have been possible if undertaken by the previous administration.

The current expansion of American imperialism globally has been rapidly accelerated since Obama became President, and seems intent on starting and expanding wars all over the world. When Obama became President, America and its Western allies were engaged in a number of wars, occupations and covert destabilizations, from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, to the Congo, and Obama took office in the midst of Israel's brutal assault against Gaza. From the beginning of his presidency, Obama immediately justified Israel's vicious attack against innocent Palestinians, rapidly accelerated the war and occupation of Afghanistan, expanded the war into Pakistan, started a new war in Yemen, and supported a military coup in Honduras, which removed a popular democratic government in favour of a brutal dictatorship. Obama's administration has expanded covert special operations throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and the Horn of Africa, and is paving the way for a war against Iran. [5] In fact, the Obama administration has expanded Special Operations forces into 75 countries around the world (compared with a height of 60 during the Bush regime). Among the many countries with expanded operations are Yemen, Colombia, the Philippines, Somalia, Pakistan, among many others. [6] Further, in recent months, the Obama administration has been saber rattling with North Korea, potentially starting a war on the Korean Peninsula. With the creation of the Pentagon's Africa Command (AFRICOM), American foreign policy on the continent has become increasingly militarized.

No continent is safe, it seems. America and its NATO cohorts are undertaking a seemingly insane foreign policy of dramatically accelerating overt and covert military imperialism. This policy seems to be headed for an eventual confrontation with the rising eastern powers, in particular China, but potentially India and Russia as well. China and America, specifically, are headed on an imperial collision course: in East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. The competition for access to resources is reminiscent of the 'Great Game' of the 19th century, of which Afghanistan was a central battlefield.

One would think that in the midst of a massive global economic crisis, the worst the world has ever seen, the major nations would scale back their imperial over-reach and militarism in order to reduce their debts and preserve their economies. However, there is an 'imperial logic' behind this situation, and one that must be placed within a wider geopolitical context.

Conceptualizing the Rise of China

First, we must properly address the nature of China's rise in the world order. What we are witnessing is an historically unique situation. For the first time, the rise of a 'new' power is taking place not in the context of rising against the hegemonic powers of the time, but within the hegemonic order. In short, China's rise has not been a rise against America, but rather a rise within the American world order. Thus, China has risen as much as the West has allowed it to rise, but that does not mean that China will not seek to serve its own interests now that it has accumulated significant global status and power. China has risen by integrating with the Western-dominated economic system, and in particular the Western banking and central banking systems. China and America are economically dependent upon one another, as America purchases China's cheap products, and China funds America's debt. In effect, China is also funding America's imperial adventurism.

Thus, we are presented with a unique situation: one of mutual dependence and competition. While China and America are dependent upon one another, they are also each other's greatest competitors, specifically in terms of access to and control over resources. For example, China supports both Iran and Sudan. These two nations are major targets of American imperial ambitions, not because of any humanitarian or anti-terrorism concerns (although that is the propaganda espoused most often), but because of the significant resources and strategic relevance of these nations. As they are not subservient to the West and specifically America, they are considered 'enemy nations', and thus the media focus on demonizing these nations so that the public is supportive of military or other means of implementing "regime change." China supports these nations because of its access to their resources, and as a counter to American influence.

Global Governance

To add another complex feature to this story, we must place this conflicting relationship in the context of the global economic crisis and the world response to it. The G20 is the principle forum for 'global governance,' in which the nations of the world are working together to

increasingly integrate their governance approaches on a global scale. The economic crisis has provided the impetus to spur on calls for and the implementation of plans to construct a system of global economic governance: a global central bank and global currency. So, as China and America are seeking to further integrate economically and globally, they are also competing for access to and control over resources.

The logic behind this is that both powers want to be able to negotiate the process of constructing a system of global governance from a more secure standpoint. While it is generally acknowledged that the world is witnessing "the rise of the East," in particular with China and India, we see the center of global power moving from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Several commentators for years have been analyzing and discussing this issue; however, the fact that power has been centered in the Atlantic for the past 500 years means that it will not be so easily moved to the Pacific. In fact, the Western powers not only acknowledge the rise of the East, but that the East has risen because they have allowed it to and aided it in this process. The Western powers have done this not out of some benevolent design, but because the organized intellectual powers of the West (namely, the principle think tanks and banking interests) have sought to create a perfect global system of governance, one in which power does not sway from nation to nation, or West to East, but rather that power is centralized globally. This is obviously a long-term project, and will not (if ever) be realized for several more decades. Yet, it is through crises – economic, political, and social – that this process of global governance can be rapidly accelerated.

See: "Crisis is an Opportunity": Engineering a Global Depression to Create a Global Government

Understanding Imperial Dynamics

There is another dynamic to this complicated relationship that must be addressed, that of the internal dynamics between the political, economic and military elite of the dominant nations. For the sake of time, I will focus on the two principle nations: America and China. America's national security apparatus, namely the Pentagon and intelligence services, have long worked in the service of the economic elite and in close cooperation with the political elite. There is a network that exists, which President Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex" where the interests of these three sectors overlap and thus America is given its imperial impetus.

It is within the major think tanks of the nation, specifically the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), where cohesion between these sectors is encouraged and managed. The think tanks, and the CFR most especially, are the policy-makers of the American Empire. Think tanks bring

together elites from most power sectors of society – the military, political, corporate, banking, intelligence, academia, media, etc. – and they discuss, debate and ultimately produce strategy blueprints and recommendations for American foreign policy. Individuals from these think tanks move in and out of the policy-making circles, creating a revolving door between the policy-planners and those that implement them. The think tanks, in this context, are essentially the intellectual engines of the American Empire.

Still, we must not assume that because they are grouped together, work together, and strategize together, that they are identical in views or methods; there is significant debate, disagreement and conflict within and between the think tanks and policy-making circles. However, dissent within these institutions is of a particular nature: it focuses on disagreement over methods rather than aims and objectives. To elaborate, the members (at least the powerful members) of think tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations do not disagree on the cause of empire and supporting American hegemony, that is a given, and is not often even discussed. That is the environment in which the elite operate.

What is up for debate and discussion is the methods used to achieve this, and it is here where significant conflicts arise between elites. Bankers and corporations seek to protect their financial and economic interests around the world. Military officials are concerned with preserving and expanding American hegemony, and are largely focused on potential rivals to American military power, and tend to favour military options of foreign policy over diplomatic ones. Political representatives must be concerned with the total influence and projection of American power – economically, militarily, politically, etc. – and so they must weigh and balance these multiple interests and translate it into a cohesive policy. Often, they lean towards the use of military might, however, there have been many incidents and issues for which political leaders have had to reign in the military and pursue diplomatic objectives. There have also been instances where the military has attempted to reign in rabidly militaristic political leaders, such as during the Bush administration with the neo-conservatives pushing for direct confrontation with Iran, prompting direct and often public protests and rebuttals from the military establishment, as well as several resignations of top-ranking generals.

These differences are often represented directly within administrations. The Kennedy years, for example, saw a continual conflict between the military and intelligence circles and the civilian leadership of John Kennedy. His brief term as President was marked by a constant struggle to prevent the military and intelligence services of America – particularly the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA – from starting wars with Cuba, Vietnam and the Soviet Union. The Cuban Missile Crisis was resolved only after Robert Kennedy, JFK's brother and the Attorney General, convinced the Russians that Kennedy was at risk of being overthrown in a military coup, which would result in a direct nuclear war against the USSR.

See: The National Security State and the Assassination of JFK

Thus, within the key policy circles – namely the think tanks and presidential cabinets – there is always a delicate balancing act of these various interests. Fundamentally, with American power, they all rest and support American corporate and banking interests. Diplomacy, especially, is concerned with supporting American corporate and financial interests abroad. As the Wikileaks diplomatic cables have revealed in a number of cases, diplomats directly intervene on behalf of and work with various corporate interests. US diplomats acted as sales agents to foreign governments promoting Boeing planes over European competitors, they pressured the government of Bangladesh to reopen a widely-opposed mine in the country operated by a British company, they lobbied the Russian government directly on behalf of the interests of Visa and Mastercard, engaged in intelligence sharing with Shell in Nigeria, and in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, US diplomats worked with major British business interests and British Prince Andrew, who stated that, "the United Kingdom, Western Europe (and by extension you Americans too," were "back in the thick of playing the Great Game," and that, "this time we aim to win!" [7]

The military, in turn, acts in the interests of the corporate and financial elite, as those countries that do not submit to American economic hegemony are deemed enemies, and the military is ultimately sent in to implement "regime change." Strategic concerns are de facto economic concerns. The military is concerned with preserving and expanding American hegemony, and to do so they must be focused on threats to American dominance, as well as securing strategic locations in the world. For example, the war in Yemen, a country with very little to offer economically, has a lot to do with strategic-economic interests. The 'threat' in Yemen is not in the form of al-Qaeda, though that is what is most propagandized, but rather it is the fact that the long-supported dictatorship of President Saleh, who has been in power since 1978, is threatened by a rebel movement in the North and a massive secessionist movement in the South, as the central government controls barely one-third of the country. In short, Yemen is on the verge of revolution, and thus, America's trusted ally and local despot, President Saleh, is at risk of being usurped. Thus, America has heavily subsidized Yemen's military, and has even directly launched cruise missiles, sent in Special Forces and other forms of assistance to help Yemen's dictator suppress, repress and ultimately crush these popular people's movements for independence and liberty.

Now why is this a strategic-economic concern to America, for a country that has little dwindling resources to offer? The answer is in Yemen's geographic location. Directly below Saudi Arabia, a revolutionary government that would be highly antagonistic towards America's trusted Saudi proxy state would be a threat to America's interests throughout the entire Middle East. It would

be likely that Iran would seek to ally itself and aid such a government, allowing Iran to expand its own political influence in the region. This is why Saudi Arabia is itself taking direct military action in Yemen against the rebels in the North, along its border. The Saudi elite are fearful of the rebellious sentiments spreading into Saudi Arabia itself. No wonder then, that America recently signed off on the largest arms deal in U.S. history with Saudi Arabia, totaling $60 billion, in an effort to support operations in Yemen but principally to act as a counter to Iranian influence in the region. Further, Yemen sits atop the Gulf of Aden, directly across from the Horn of Africa (namely Somalia), connecting the Black Sea to the Arabian Sea, which is itself one of the major oil transport routes in the world. Strategic control over the nations lining the Gulf of Aden is of primary interest to American imperial strategists, whether they are military, political or economic in nature.

Yemen is also directly across the water from Somalia, another country ravaged by the American war machine. As the diplomatic cables confirmed, in 2006, “the Bush Administration pushed Ethiopia to invade Somalia with an eye on crushing the Union of Islamic Courts,” which is exactly what happened, and Somalia has been a ‘failed state’ mired in civil war ever since. [8] The piracy that has exploded in the waters off of Somalia are a result of the massive toxic waste dumping and over-fishing done by European and American and other major shipping lines, and have served as an excuse for the militarization of the waters. In this context, it would be unacceptable from a strategic standpoint to allow Yemen to fall from American influence. Thus, America is at war in Yemen.

See: Yemen: The Covert Apparatus of the American Empire

China, alternatively, does not have such direct cohesion between its political, economic and military sectors. China’s military is intensely nationalistic, and while the political elite are more cooperative with U.S. interests and often work to achieve mutual interests, the military sees America as a direct challenge and antagonistic (which of course, it is). China’s economic elite, specifically its banking elite, are heavily integrated with the West, so much so that it is very difficult to separate the two. There is not such an integration between the Chinese and American military establishments, nor is there an internal dynamic within China that reflects the American system of empire. The divisions between military, political and economic circles are more pronounced within China than in America. The Chinese political leadership is put into a very challenging situation. Determined to see China advance economically, they must work with America and the West. However, on key political issues (such as with Taiwan), the political leadership must adhere to an intensely nationalistic approach, which is counter to U.S. interests, and supportive of Chinese military interests. Increasing military superiority is seen as a key aspect and objective of China’s increasing political dominance in the world scene. As one top Chinese general stated in 2005, “China should use nuclear weapons against the United States if the American military intervenes in any conflict over Taiwan.” The General cited “war

logic" which "dictates that a weaker power needs to use maximum efforts to defeat a stronger rival." His view suggested that elements within the Chinese military are 'determined' to respond with extreme force if America intervenes in any potential conflict over Taiwan, saying that, "We Chinese will prepare ourselves for the destruction of all the cities east of Xian. Of course the Americans will have to be prepared that hundreds of cities will be destroyed by the Chinese." [9]

The Logic of Competitive Co-Operation

The Chinese military must be ready to protect its economic interests abroad if it is to have control over its own economic growth and thus maintain international power. Thus, China's political impetus to support and increase its international influence is very conflicting. On the one hand, this means actively cooperating with America and the West (primarily in economic matters, as we see with the G20, where China is engaging in the dialogue and the implementation of global governance arrangements); and on the other hand, China must also challenge America and the West in order to secure its own access to and control over vital resources necessary for its own economic and political growth. China is placed in a paradoxical situation. While working with the West to construct the apparatus of global governance, China does not want to be dictated to, and instead wants a strong negotiating position in these arrangements. So while engaging in discussions and negotiations for the construction of a system of global governance, China must also actively seek to increase its control over key strategic resources in the world in order to strengthen its own negotiating position. It is often the case that when warring parties come to the table for negotiations, the on-the-ground operations are rapidly accelerated in order to strengthen the negotiating position of the respective party.

This was the case during the Rwandan Civil War, where throughout the Arusha Peace Process, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), heavily supported by America against the Rwandan government (which was supported by France and Belgium), rapidly accelerated its military campaign, thus gaining the upper hand during negotiations, which worked in its favour, ultimately resulting in the Rwandan genocide (which was sparked by the RPF's assassination of the Rwandan president), and the RPF usurped power in Rwanda. This is also the case in Israel-Palestine "peace" negotiations, such as during the Oslo process, where Israel rapidly accelerated its expansion of settlements into the occupied territories, essentially ethnically cleansing much of the Palestinian populations of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This expanded process of ethnic cleansing is what the Western political leaders and media call a "peace process." Thus, when Palestinians react to this ethnic cleansing and expansion of the settlements (which is an inherently violent process), or a suicide bombing or mortar attack takes place in reaction to this expansion of settlements, Western political leaders and media blame the Palestinians for breaking a period of "relative peace" or "relative calm." Apparently, it is considered to be "relative peace" if only Palestinians are being killed. Thus, Israel always

ensures that through any negotiation process, its interests are met above all others.

So we see this logic with China and America today. While not directly at war with one another, they are each other's greatest competition. This competition is prevalent in Central Asia, where America is seeking dominance over the region's enormous natural gas reserves, thus depriving China of access to and control over these vital strategic resources. It is also heavily present in Africa, where China has presented an alternative to going to the World Bank and IMF for African governments to get loans and support in exchange for resource access. In this context, America established its newest Pentagon command, Africa Command (AFRICOM) to merge American diplomatic, civil society and military policy in Africa under command of the Pentagon. In the Middle East, America is primarily dominant, thus leaving China pushed to ally itself with Iran. In South America, China is allying itself with the somewhat progressive governments which rose in opposition to American military and economic hegemony over the region.

This logic holds for both America and China. Both seek to secure a dominant position while engaging in discussions and the implementation of a global governance apparatus. This leads both powers to seek cooperation and mutual benefit, yet, simultaneously, compete globally for control of resources. This is magnified by the global economic crisis, which has revealed the weaknesses of the global economy, and indeed the global monetary and banking systems. The world economy is on the verge of total collapse. The next decade will be scarred by a new Great Depression. This provides a further impetus for both of these powers to rapidly accelerate their control over resources and expand their military adventurism.

The American Empire is in decline, and is utterly bankrupt; however, its elites, which are in fact more global than national in their ideology and orientation, are seeking to not simply have American power disappear, or be replaced with Chinese power, but rather to use American power to construct the apparatus of a new global structure of authority, and that the American Empire will simply fade into a global structure. This is a delicate balancing act for the global elite, and requires integrating China and the other dominant powers within this system. It also inherently implies the ultimate domination of the 'global south' (Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia). This is an entirely new process being undertaken. Empires have risen and fallen throughout all of human history. This time, the fall of the American Empire is taking place within the context of the rise of a totally new kind of power: global in scope, structure and authority. This will no doubt be one of the defining geopolitical events of the next several decades.

Historically, periods of imperial decline are marked by a rapid acceleration of international conflict and war, as the declining power seeks to control as much as it can as fast as it can (thus we see America's seemingly insane expansion of war, conflict and militarization

everywhere in the world), while rising powers seek to take advantage of this decline in order to accelerate the collapse of the declining power, and secure their position as the next dominant power. Yet, in this geopolitical landscape of the 21st century, we are faced with this entirely new context, where the decline of one empire and the rise of a new power are taking place while both seek to integrate and construct an entirely new system and structure of power, yet both seek to secure for themselves a dominant position within this new structure. The potential for conflict is enormous, possibly resulting in a direct war between America and China, or in a mass of global proxy wars between them.

This new century will indeed be an interesting one. The prospects of a new global war are increasing with every accelerated military adventure. The primary antagonist in this theatre of the absurd is without a doubt, the United States. If the world is headed for World War III, it is because America has made such a situation inevitable. One cannot preclude that for many global elites, such a result may be desirable in and of itself. After all, World War I provided the impetus for the formation of the League of Nations, and World War II provided the push for the United Nations to “secure peace between nations.” In a world largely run by global strategists, it would be naïve to assume that it has not occurred to some that a new world war could be precisely the event they need to convince the people of the world to accept their desired system of global governance; no doubt to secure ‘world peace.’ At least, I am sure it will be sold under that pretense.

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